STATE OF MICHIGAN

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES & ENVIRONMENT

JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM
GOVERNOR

LANSING

REBECCA A. HUMPHRIES
DIRECTOR

TO: Governor Jennifer M. Granholm
Senate Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs Committee Members
House Great Lakes and Environment Committee Members

FROM: Thor M. Strong, Acting Commissioner
Low-Level Radioactive Waste Authority

DATE: March 22, 2010

SUBJECT: Low-Level Radioactive Waste 2008 Survey Report

Section 18(a) of the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Authority Act, 1987 PA 204, as amended, requires generators of low-level radioactive waste (LLRW) to annually report to the Low-Level Radioactive Waste Authority (Authority), Department of Natural Resources and Environment (DNRE), certain information on the volume, type, and activity of the LLRW produced. The Authority, in turn, provides a summary of the reported data to the Governor and appropriate legislative committees. This report is a brief summary of the information submitted by generators for calendar year 2008.

In previous years, a more complete report summarizing the survey data has been prepared. However, the list of facilities generating LLRW, the types and volumes of operational LLRW generated, and the management methods employed have remained fairly stable over many years. For this reason, an abbreviated report is being produced this year. Last year's report can be found at: http://www.michigan.gov/deq/0,1607,7-135-3312_24659---,00.html.

In calendar year 2008, a total of 24 entities reported the generation of waste that would require disposal in a licensed LLRW disposal facility. The table, below, compares 2008 data with that of 2007. The greater volumes reported in 2007 were largely due to decommissioning projects at the University of Michigan's Ford Nuclear Reactor and at Detroit Edison's Fermi I reactor. (There has been significant variability in the volume of waste from decommissioning projects, with peak volumes occurring in 2006 as a result of the complete dismantlement of the Big Rock Point Nuclear Plant near Charlevoix.)

Type of Facility	Number of Facilities Reporting Waste in 2008	Volume of LLRW Generated in 2008 (ft^3)	Number of Facilities Reporting Waste in 2007	Volume of LLRW Generated in 2007 (ft^3)
Academic	7	1,994	8	20,152
Government	2	17	3	46
Industry	7	2,941	8	2,266
Medical	4	18	2	27
Utility	4	47,406	4	76,957
Total	24	52,376	25	99,448

LLRW is categorized in Classes – Class A, B, and C. Class A waste constitutes by far the largest volume of LLRW. Michigan waste generators are able to ship Class A waste to a licensed disposal facility in Utah. Class B and C waste is generated in much smaller volumes but is significantly more radioactive than Class A waste.

One significant development in radioactive waste disposal occurred in 2008. The EnergySolutions disposal facility located in Barnwell, South Carolina, stopped receiving LLRW from all states that were not part of the Atlantic Low-Level Waste Compact (South Carolina, New Jersey, and Connecticut). Under the provisions of the federal Low-Level Radioactive Waste Policy Act of 1980, Public Law 96-573 (LLRWPA), an interstate compact can restrict access to only its member states. This disposal facility in South Carolina had been the only facility in the nation that would accept Class B and C waste from Michigan and 35 other states. As a result of this loss of access, Michigan generators currently have no disposal option for Class B and C wastes.

Because of this loss of access, the 2008 survey specifically posed questions about the impact of the loss of access to disposal options for Class B and C wastes. Five Michigan facilities reported that they had generated Class B or C waste, totaling about 750 cubic feet of waste. All of those respondents indicated that they can safely store those wastes, and all but one indicated that they currently have adequate capacity for such storage. One nuclear utility indicated that additional storage capacity would soon have to be purchased and that eventually a new waste processing and storage facility would need to be built.

The lack of a disposal option for Class B and C wastes does not pose an imminent health or safety problem for Michigan residents and should not significantly impact those facilities that need to store such wastes. All of these facilities are licensees of the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, which regularly inspects their operations, including waste management and storage practices.

However, the fact that waste generators in 36 states have no disposal option for such waste does suggest that the national framework for managing and assuring disposal of radioactive waste, established under the LLRWPA, is not working. In the long-term, a disposal option will need to be found.

The Authority will continue to monitor and evaluate the effects and impacts of this lack of disposal access. It will also push for sensible change in the laws, regulations, and practices for the management of LLRW.

If you have any questions about this report, please contact me at 517-241-1252.

TMS:JK
cc: Nathaniel Lake, Governor's Office
Rebecca A. Humphries, Director, DNRE
Jim Sygo, Deputy Director, DNRE
Frank Ruswick, Deputy Director, DNRE
Carol Linteau, DNRE
George Bruchmann, DNRE